

hot off the press

Bringing you the latest and greatest hardware products that missed the chart deadline by a whisker, our *Reviews* team puts Palm's latest PDAs, a high-end Atlas PC and two of Toshiba's Power notebooks, the Portege 2000 and the Satellite Pro, through their paces

Palm m130 and m515

Personal digital assistants

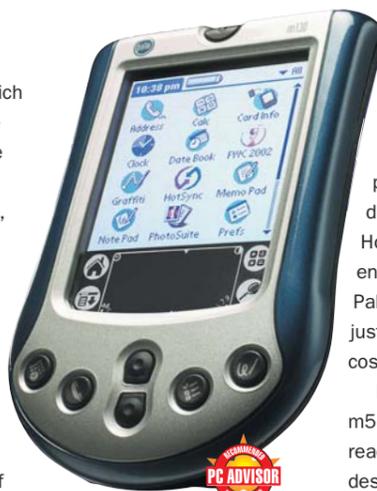
After a quiet few months from Palm, the daddy of the handheld market has released two new models together. The PDA (personal digital assistant) market as a whole has been rather flat of late, with no really compelling reason to upgrade. However, do the m130 and m515 have what it takes to attract new customers?

Technicolour dream device

First up is the Palm m130, which is the same form factor as the m125 and slots neatly into the series above this device. What this latest model adds, though, is a colour screen – the first time Palm has offered colour on its lower end products, although the higher price immediately pushes it out of the budget category.

Admittedly the colour screen does look good, and it makes the whole experience of using the device more pleasant. There is another addition that enhances your viewing pleasure – a contrast control, accessed by tapping on an icon in the righthand corner of the Graffiti writing area.

As adding a colour screen makes greater demands on battery life, Palm has swapped the triple A batteries found in the m125 in favour of a lithium-ion battery on the m130, which recharges whenever it is plugged into the docking cradle. The final new feature on the m130 is Palm OS 4.1. This new version of the operating system has been enhanced to offer better Bluetooth support, and allows you to dial direct from the phonebook via a single tap.



Long in the Bluetooth

The m515 is less innovative, as it's really just an updated version of the m505. It uses the same colour screen, but now the backlight is twice as powerful, and you can choose from three contrast settings – low, medium and high.

This Palm has a memory of 16MB, although we are not sure how much of a bargain this is – the m515 costs around £70 more than the 8MB m505, and yet you can pick up a 32MB SD (secure digital) card for around £50. However, you do get all the enhancements offered by Palm OS 4.1 and the brighter screen. Palm is also offering a bundle that adds a Bluetooth SD card for just under £70. This works out to be a good deal, as it would cost over £100 to buy the components separately.

Palm has upgraded the software on both the m130 and m515. It now includes Documents to Go 4.0, which supports read-only PowerPoint slides, and there's better integration with desktop documents. You also get the latest version of MGI PhotoSuite Mobile Edition thrown in for free.

Winners all round

While these products came in too late to hit our chart deadline, if they had entered our PDAs chart this month the m130 would have won second place and a Recommended award, as it's one of the cheapest colour devices out there. The m515 would have entered the chart at number three, pipping the m505 to the post.

Palm: 020 7365 9820

Website: www.palm.com/europe

Price: m130 £196 ex VAT, m515 £315 ex VAT, m515 and Bluetooth SD card £383 ex VAT

Ursula Tolaini

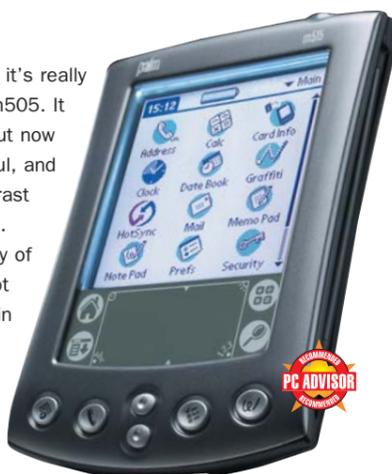
wireless, 40GB hard drive, DVD/CD-RW combo drive, SD (secure digital) slot and a 15in XGA screen all for under £2,000, and it's an impressive bundle. Find out how it fairs in the chart next month.

Toshiba: 0870 444 8944

Website: www.toshiba.co.uk

Price: under £2,000 ex VAT

Will Head



Atlas Meridian XP 2100

Power PC

Atlas is usually one of the first manufacturers to include cutting-edge technologies in its PCs, and the Meridian XP 2100 is no exception. Not only does this high-end system include AMD's brand new 2100+ processor, it also comes with an excellent 128MB GeForce4 Ti 4400 graphics card. This all adds up to an impressive PC.

The Athlon 2100+, which runs at 1.733GHz, more than rivals the faster 2.2GHz Pentium 4 chip from Intel. Combined with 512MB of DDR (double data rate) RAM and a 60GB hard drive we weren't surprised to see the Meridian XP 2100 achieve a speedy WorldBench 4 score of 128.

Aiding the extra performance on the Atlas is the GeForce 4 Ti 4400 graphics card. It wasn't long ago that we were looking at Power PCs with 128MB of RAM and now we're seeing this amount of memory devoted solely to graphics. We ran some Quake 3 tests to find out just how well the card can cope with frame rates over several resolutions and the results were phenomenal.



We managed nearly 70fps (frames per second) at 1,600x1,200dpi (dots per inch), which is head and shoulders above the competition. The Ti 4400 is also fast for video encoding and, as another bonus for DV (digital video) enthusiasts, there's the addition of an Audigy card with an integrated FireWire port. The Meridian XP 2100's screen is a 19in LG Flatron 915FT Plus, our Recommended choice (see the Monitors chart on page 120), while the excellent DTT2200 speakers handle audio. Backup duties are satisfied by a 40-/24-/10-speed (read/write/rewrite) CD-RW drive, and there's also a 16-speed DVD-ROM. Internally there's space for upgrade and there's an extra fan to help keep things cool. A three-year onsite warranty protects your investment.

If the Atlas Meridian had come in early enough to be included in our charts it would have hit the number four slot, winning itself a Recommended award.

Atlas: 020 8532 6120

Price: £1,399 ex VAT

Spencer Dalziel

Toshiba Portege 2000

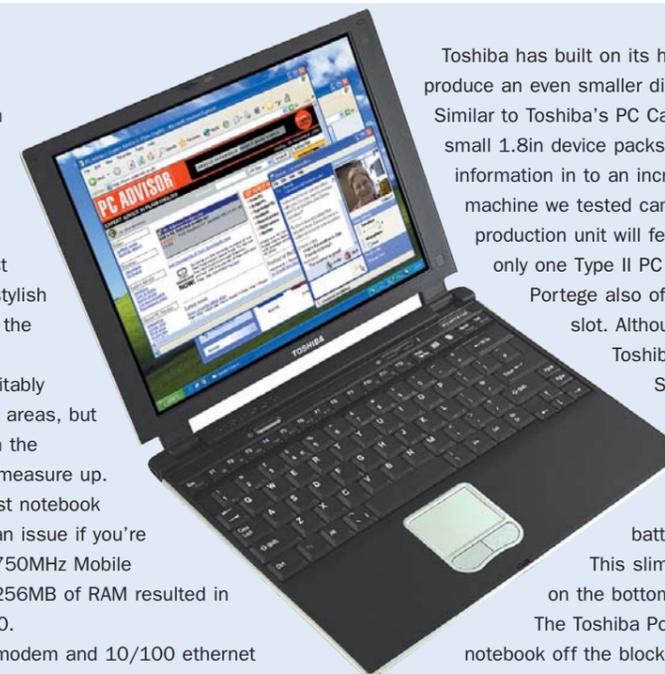
Power notebook

Toshiba's new super-slim Portege 2000 packs a lot of functionality into an incredibly small space. Measuring just 289x229x15mm it's the thinnest and also one of the most stylish notebooks to pass through the *PC Advisor* Test Centre.

A small form factor inevitably means skimping on certain areas, but if portability is the key then the Portege should more than measure up. The Toshiba isn't the fastest notebook around, but that's less of an issue if you're using it on the move. The 750MHz Mobile Pentium III processor and 256MB of RAM resulted in a WorldBench 4 score of 60.

In addition to a built-in modem and 10/100 ethernet card, there's an internal 802.11b wireless LAN card. Although you can purchase PC Card adapters, wireless networking really comes into its own when it's integrated. There are no cards to carry around – simply switch on and you're ready to go.

When it comes to keeping the size down, every component counts. Most notebooks use 2.5in hard drives, rather than the larger 3.5in seen in desktop PCs.



Toshiba has built on its hard drive experience to produce an even smaller disk for the Portege 2000. Similar to Toshiba's PC Card hard drives, the super small 1.8in device packs any amazing amount of information in to an incredibly small space. The machine we tested came with a 5GB drive, but the production unit will feature a 20GB unit. There's only one Type II PC Card slot on the side, but the Portege also offers a SD (secure digital) card slot. Although primarily for storage,

Toshiba has promised a Bluetooth SD card in the near future.

Battery life runs to about two hours with the standard battery, but there's also an extended battery included in the package.

This slim lithium-polymer battery clips on the bottom, giving up to nine hours use.

The Toshiba Portege 2000 is not the fastest notebook off the blocks, but it more than makes up for it in size and style. If you want the ultimate in portability and still be the envy of the office, then the Portege 2000 is just what you're looking for.

Toshiba: 0870 444 8944

Website: www.toshiba.co.uk

Price: £1,699

Will Head